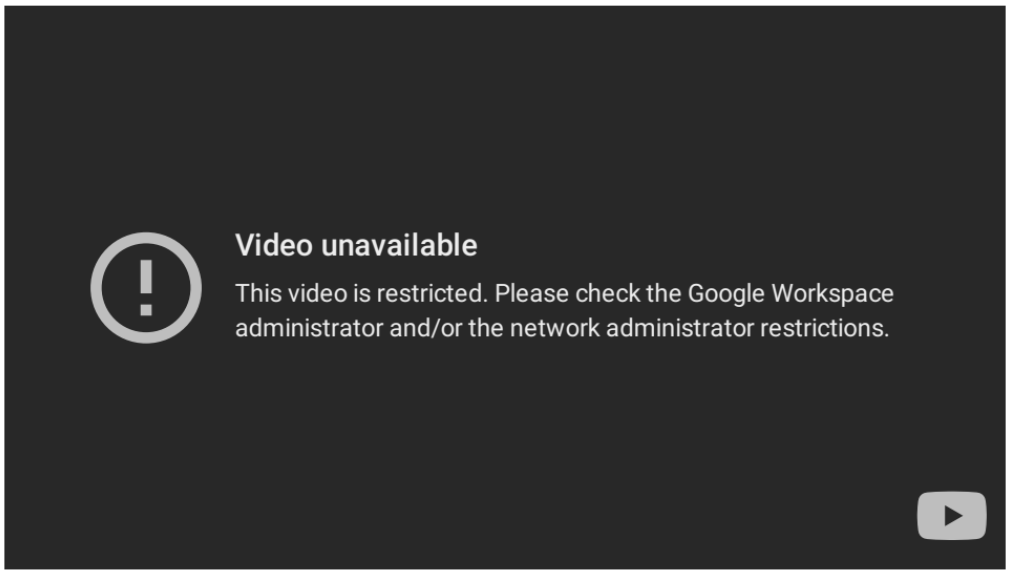
THE HISTORICAL INSPIRATIONS BEHIND SEKIRO - PT 1

Posted 07 September 2020
By Richmond Lee

Alright! Tonight we're gonna attempt a deep dive into the real life culture and history behind Sekiro (隻狼)! This will be a shot by shot breakdown of the launch trailer. There's A LOT to unpack here, so let's get to it!



The trailer opens with a shot of a statue of Guanyin (觀音) aka Kannon, one of the most widely venerated deities in Asia. She is a Bodhisattva, a being who has attained enlightenment and remains in the earthly realms to help all other sentient beings lead a righteous life

Kannon embodies the virtue of compassion. In English, she is often referred to as the Buddhist “Goddess of Mercy” though Kannon can actually appear as any gender. She is worshipped and beloved by every denomination of Buddhism throughout the world.

Guanyin or **Guan Yin** (/ˌgwɑːnˈjɪn/)[1] is an East Asian bodhisattva associated with compassion and venerated by Mahayana Buddhists and followers of Chinese folk religions, also known as the "**Goddess of Mercy**" in English. The Chinese name Guanyin, short for **Guanshiyin**, means "[The One Who] Perceives the Sounds of the World".[2]

Some Buddhists believe that when one of their adherents departs from this world, they are placed by Guanyin in the heart of a lotus, and then sent to the western Pure Land of Sukhāvatī.[3] Guanyin is often referred to as the "most widely beloved Buddhist Divinity"[4] with miraculous powers to assist all those who pray to her, as is said in the Lotus Sutra and Karandavyuha Sutra.

Painting of Guanyin in male form by Zhang Daqian 觀音像

Kannon is often depicted brandishing a willow branch or lotus flower in her right hand and a vase in her left, which you can clearly see in this shot. It’s said to contain water which cleanses the body and spirit of impurities and can even stave off death.

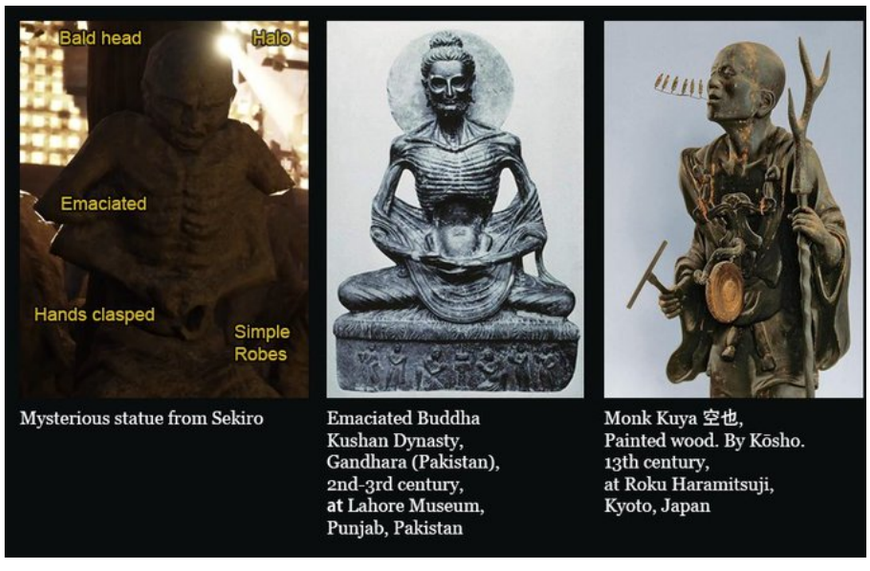
The imagery of the burning temple and statue of Kannon convey the rejection of compassion, salvation and even death itself. This is surely a story about giving it your all for REVENGE.

Next we see a very curious statue. From its bald head and robes, this appears to be a monk. But it has four arms, like a deity.

The shot is framed so it almost looks as if a beam of light is being emited from its head, implying enlightenment.

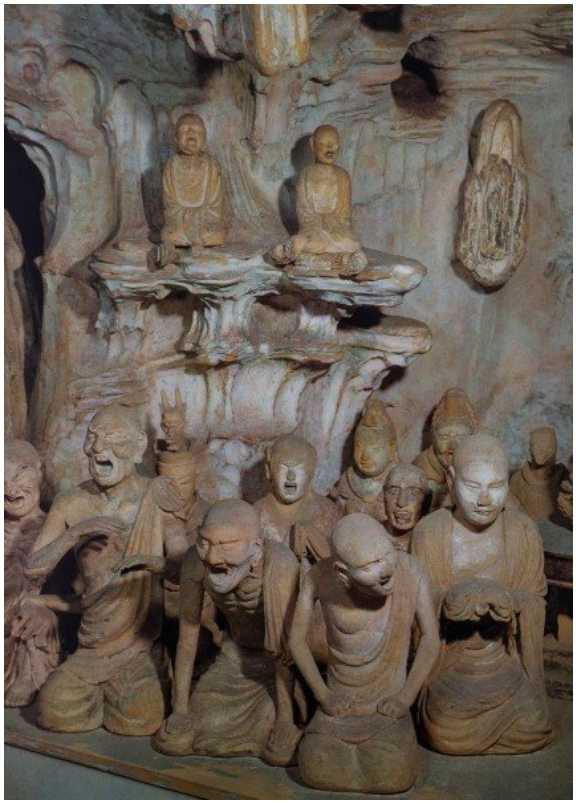
All these characteristics together do not match any statues or deities that I know of from historical Buddhist art. It has multiple arms, but only 4, so it's not an Asura (6 arms) or higher deity (up to 1000+ arms!).

The statue actually feels very human. With it's bald head and robes it could be a monk. Aspects of it remind me of traditional depictions of Siddartha Guatama during his ascetic phase before he attained enlightenment and became the Buddha.



Digging deeper into the Japanese side of the internet, I was able to find what I believe to be the closest real life analog to this statue. Behold! The Arhats crying over the death of Buddha from Horyu-ji Temple (法隆寺)!

This collection of statues depicts the last moments of the life of the historical Buddha. His disciples, the arhats, typically paragons of calm and poise, are crying out in pain at the loss of their mentor and friend.



source: http://deep.wakuwaku-nara.com/houryuujitou/

A lot of people think that the goal of Buddhism is to become an emotionless robot in order to attain enlightenment. This is not true.

Does Buddhism embrace emptiness and no emotion? : Buddhism - Reddit
https://www.reddit.com/.../Buddhism/.../does_buddhism_embrace_emptiness_and_no... ▾
Dec 3, 2013 - 7 posts - 6 authors
If you bring something, your own emotional baggage, into a ... that sets you off, they you won't be able to really hear the other person. You're ...

Buddhism is a deeply practical belief system that does not punish vulnerability. It's natural to feel grief at the passing of a loved one. And that's OK. It's not something to be ashamed of.

The Buddha meets his own death with serenity, and even calmly comforts his followers and tells them not to grieve. But he does not begrudge them for it. Remember, when you see a comfortable looking reclining Buddha, that's actually him on his deathbed!

This is a powerful scene to reference. Loss is sure to be a major theme of Sekiro. The Buddhist imagery isn't just for show! It highlights how your quest for revenge is the exact opposite of the noble path towards compassion outlined in Buddhist doctrine.

Alright, that's it for tonight! We made it a whole ... 7 seconds into the trailer and there's already this much to discuss! Please look forward to MUCH MORE in the coming weeks! Thanks for reading! Have a good one!

Addendum

The contents of this article were originally posted to Twitter. You can see the original thread here:
https://twitter.com/Richmond_Lee/status/1038189422636806144?s=20

This thread was written in September of 2018 as a reaction to the first announcement trailer for Sekiro at E3 2018. Sekiro would go on to launch 6 months later on March 22, 2019. All the analysis here is based off of the trailer alone, with no hands on experience with the actual game. It's a testament to the excellent art direction of Sekiro that it can communicate so much in just a few seconds of footage!

Please stay tuned for the rest of the trailer analysis in the future!

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